



Office of the Attorney General  
State of Texas

DAN MORALES  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

May 9, 1995

Mr. G. Mike Davis  
State Fire Marshall  
Texas Commission on Fire Protection  
P.O. Box 2286  
Austin, Texas 78768-2286

OR95-270

Dear Mr. Davis:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Texas Open Records Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 32913.

The Texas Commission on Fire Protection (the "commission") received a request for "a copy of your report or at least a synopsis of your investigation" regarding a residential fire that occurred on February 11, 1995, at 301 Blanton Street in Fairfield. You inform us that you have provided the requestor information from the first page of the report. You state that the case file in question is an open and active investigation. You contend that, with the exception of the first page of the report, you believe the information requested is excepted from disclosure by section 552.108 of the Government Code.

Section 552.108 provides that "[a] record of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from" disclosure. Section 552.108 applies to all records created by an agency whose primary function is to investigate crimes and enforce the criminal laws. Open Records Decision Nos. 493 (1988) at 2, 287 (1981) at 2. Section 552.108 excepts from required public disclosure all information related to cases under active investigation except certain basic information ordinarily appearing in the first page of an offense report. The press and public have a right to access certain information maintained by law enforcement agencies relating to crime and criminal activities which extends affirmatively to certain basic factual information contained in a police offense report. *Houston Chronicle Publishing Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.--Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), writ *ref'd n.r.e.*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976).

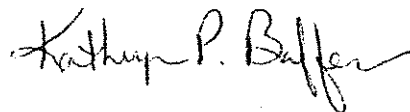
As a general rule, information which may be withheld includes portions of the report calling for the investigator's opinion and conclusions concerning probable motive for the fire, notes about laboratory tests, the names of possible suspects along with any information about their description or possible location, and the names of witnesses and summaries of their statements. Open Records Decision Nos. 371 (1983) at 2, 134 (1976).

The kinds of basic information not excepted from disclosure by section 552.108 include the following information about the fire: 1) the dates of the investigation, 2) the names of the investigator(s), 3) the cause of the fire, 4) the owner of the property, 5) the occupant, 6) location of the loss or incident, 7) weather conditions, 8) structural information, 9) name and address of insuring company, 10) amount of insurance involved, 11) names of the insurance company and the adjuster, 12) extent of damage, 13) whether there were any fatalities or injuries involved, 14) who discovered the fire, 15) who reported the fire; and 16) the status of the case. Open Records Decision No. 134 (1976).

Because the investigation of the fire is continuing, we conclude that such information as that listed in *Houston Chronicle Publishing Co.* and Open Records Decision 134 (1976), some of which is not listed on the first page of the report but appears elsewhere in the report, is subject to disclosure. See Open Records Decision No. 394 (1983). The commission may withhold the remaining information in the report based upon section 552.108.

We are resolving this matter with an informal letter ruling rather than with a published open records decision. This ruling is limited to the particular records at issue under the facts presented to us in this request and may not be relied upon as a previous determination under section 552.301 regarding any other records. If you have questions about this ruling, please contact our office.

Yours very truly,



Kathryn P. Baffes  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Government Section

KPB/KHG/rho

Ref.: ID# 32913

Enclosures: Submitted documents

cc: Mr. Ron Unruh  
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(w/o enclosures)